"And who is this Colonel Bridge?" asked Aramis.

"Colonel Bridge," replied the Spaniard, "is a retired wagoner, a man of much sense, who made one observation in driving his team, namely, that where there happened to be a stone on the road, it was much easier to remove the stone than to try and make the wheel pass over it. Now, of two hundred and fifty-one members who composed the Parliament, there were one hundred and ninety-one who were in his way, and might have upset his political wagon. He took them up, just as he formerly used to take up the stones from the road, and threw them out of the house."

"Next," remarked D'Artagnan, "very!"

"And all these one hundred and ninety-one were Stuartists!" asked Athos.

"Without doubt, seigneur; and you understand, that they would have saved the king."

"To be sure," said Porthos, majestically, "they were in the majority."

"And you think," said Aramis, "he will consent to appear before such a tribunal?"

"He will be forced to do so," answered the Spaniard.

"No, Athos!" said D'Artagnan, "do you begin to believe that it's a ruined cause? and that what with your Harrisons, Joyces, Bridges, and Cromwells, we shall never get the upper hand?"

"But," said Aramis, "if they dare to condemn their king, it can only be to exile or imprisonment."

D'Artagnan whistled a little air of incredulity.

"We shall see," said Athos, "for we shall go to the sittings, I presume."

"You will not have long to wait," said the landlord; "they begin to-morrow."

"So, then, they drew up the indictment before the king was taken?"

"Of course," said D'Artagnan; "they began the day he was sold."

"And you know," said Aramis, "that it was our friend Mor- doult who made, if not the harspin, at least the first overtures."

"And you know," added D'Artagnan, "that whenever I catch him I kill him, this Mr. Mordoult."

"And I, too," exclaimed Porthos.

"And I, too," added Aramis.

"Touching unanimity?" cried D'Artagnan, "which well becomes good citizens like us. Let us take a turn round the town, and have a little fog."

"Yes," said Porthos. "It will be a change from the beer."

CHAPTER LXXI

THE TRIAL.

The next morning King Charles I., was brought by a strong guard before the high court which was to judge him. All London was crowding to the doors of the house. The throng was terrific; and it was not till after much pushing and some fighting that our
friends reached their destination. When they did so, they found the three lower rows of benches already occupied; but, as they were not anxious to be too conspicuous, all, with the exception of Porthos, who was anxious to display his red doublet, were quite satisfied with their places, the more so as chance had brought them to the center of their row, so that they were exactly opposite the armchair prepared for the royal prisoner.

Toward eleven o'clock the hall entered the hall, surrounded by guards, but wearing his head covered, and with a calm expression turned to every side with a look of complete assurance, as if he were there to preside at an assembly of submissive subjects, rather than to reply to the accusations of a rebel court.

The judges, proud of having a monarch to humble, evidently prepared to enjoy the sight they had arrogated to themselves, and sent an officer to inform the king that it was customary for the accused to uncover his head.

Charles, without replying a single word, turned his head in another direction, and pulled his felt hat over it. Then, when the officer was gone, he sat down in the arm-chair opposite the president, and struck his boot with a little cane which he carried in his hand.

Porthos, who accompanied him, stood behind him.

D'Artagnan was looking at Athos, whose face betrayed all those emotions which the king, possessing more power over himself, had chased from his own. This agitation, in one so cool and calm as Athos, frightened him.

"I hope," he whispered to him, "that you will follow his Majesty's example, and not get killed for your folly in this den."

"Set your mind at rest," replied Athos.

"Ah!" continued D'Artagnan, "it is clear that they are afraid of something or other; for, look, the sentinels are being re-enforced. They had only halberds before, and now they have muskets. The halberds were for the audience in the rear. The muskets are for us."

"Thirty, forty, fifty, sixty five men," said Porthos, counting the re-enforcements.

"Ah!" said Aramis. "But you forget the officer."

D'Artagnan grew pale with rage. He had recognized Mordaunt, who, with bare sword, was marshaling the musketeers before the king, and opposite the benches.

"Do you think they have recognized us?" said D'Artagnan.

"In that case I should beat a retreat. I don't care to be shot in a box."

"No," said Aramis, "he has not seen us. He sees no one but the king. 'Mon Dieu!' how he stares at him, the insolent dog! Does he hate his Majesty as much as he does us?"

"Pardi," answered Athos, "we only carried off his mother, and the king has spoiled him of his name and property."

"True," said Aramis; "but silence: the president is speaking to the king."

"Stuart," Bradshaw was saying, "listen to the roll-call of your judges, and address to the court any observations you may have to make."

The king turned his head away, as if these words had not been
intended for him. Brabshaw waited, and as there was no reply, there was a moment of silence.

Out of the hundred and sixty-three members designated, there were only seventy-three present, for the rest, fearful of taking part in such an act, had remained away.

When the name of Colonel Fairfax was called, one of those brief but solemn silences ensued, which announced the absence of the members who had no wish to take a personal part in the trial.

"Colonel Fairfax," repeated Brabshaw.

"Fairfax?" answered a laughing voice, the silvery tone of which betrayed it as that of a woman, "he is not such a fool as to be here."

A loud laugh followed these words, pronounced with that boldness which women draw from their own weakness—a weakness which removes them beyond the power of vengeance.

"It is a woman's voice," cried Aramis, "faith, I would give a good deal for her to be young and pretty." And he mounted on the bench to try and get a sight of her.

"By my soul," said Aramis, "she is charming. Look, D'Artagnan; everybody is looking at her; and in spite of Brabshaw's gare, she has not turned pale."

"It is Lady Fairfax herself," said D'Artagnan, "don't you remember, Porthos, we saw her at General Cromwell's?"

The roll-call continued.

"These musketeers will adjourn when they find that they are not in sufficient force," said the Comte de la Fère.

"You don't know them, Athos; look at Mornant's smile. Is that the look of a man whose victim is likely to escape him? Ah, cursed basilisk, it will be a happy day for me when I can cross something more than a look with you."

"The king is really very handsome," said Porthos; "and look, too, though he is a prisoner, how carefully he is dressed. The feather in his hat is worth at least fifty pistoles. Look at it, Aramis."

The roll-call finished, the president ordered them to read the act of accusation. Athos turned pale. A second time he was disappointed in his expectation.

"I told you so, Athos," said D'Artagnan, shrugging his shoulders.

"Now take your courage in both hands, and hear what this gentleman in black is going to say about his sovereign, with full license and privilege."

Never till then had a more brutal accusation or meaner insults tarnished the kingly majesty.

Charles listened with marked attention, passing over the insults, noting the grievances, and, when hatred overflowed all bounds, and the accuser turned executioner beforehand, replying with a smile of contempt.

"The fact is," said D'Artagnan, "if men are punished for imprudence and triviality, this poor king deserves punishment. But it seems to me that that which he is just now undergoing is hard enough."

At this moment the accuser concluded with these words: "The
present accusation is preferred by us in the name of the English people."

At these words there was a murmur along the benches, and a second voice, not that of a woman, but a man's, stout and furious, thundered behind D'Artagnan:

"You lie," it cried, "and nine-tenths of the English people shoulder at what you say."

This voice was that of Athos, who standing up with outstretched arm, and quite out of his mind, thus assailed the public accuser.

King, judges, spectators, all turned their eyes to the bench where the four friends were seated. Morathant did the same, and recognized the gentleman, around whom the three other Frenchmen were standing, pale and menacing. His eyes glittered with delight. He had discovered those to whose death he had devoted his life. A movement of fury called to his side some twenty of his musketeers, and pointing to the bench where his enemies were, "Fire on that bench," he cried.

But, rapid as thought, D'Artagnan seized Athos by the middle of the body, and followed by Portos with Aramis, leapt down from the benches, rushed into the passages, and flying down the staircase, were lost in the crowd without, while the muskets within were pointed on some 8,000 spectators, whose piteous cries and noisy alarms stopped the impulse already given to bloodshed.

Morathant, pale and trembling with anger, rushed from the hall, sword in hand, followed by six pikemen, pushing, uprising, and putting in the crowd; and then, having found nothing, returned.

Quiet was at length restored.

"What have you to say in your defense?" asked Bradshaw of the king.

Then, rising with his head still covered, in the tone of a judge rather than a prisoner, Charles began.

"Before questioning me," he said, "reply to my question. I was free at Newcastle, and had there concluded a treaty with both houses. Instead of performing your part of this contract, as I performed mine, you bought me from the Scotch, not dear, I know, and that does honor to the economy of your government. But because you have paid the price of a slave, do you expect that I have ceased to be your king? No. To answer you would be to forget it. I shall only reply to you when you have satisfied me of your right to question me. To answer you would be to acknowledge you as my judges, and I only acknowledge you as my executioners."

And in the midst of a death-like silence, Charles, calm, steady, and with his head still covered, sat down again in his arm-chair.

"Why are not my Frenchmen here?" he murmured proudly, and turning his eyes to the benches where they had appeared for a moment: "they would have seen that their friend was worthy of their defense, while alive; and of their tears, when dead."

"Well," said the president—seeing that Charles was determined to remain silent—"so be it. We will judge you in spite of your silence. You are accused of treason, of abuse of power, and murder. The evidence will support it. Go, and another sitting will accomplish what you have refused to do in this."
Charles rose, and turned toward Parry, whom he found pallid, and with his temples covered with moisture.

"Well, my dear Parry," said he, "what is the matter? and what can affect you in this manner?"

"Oh, my king," said Parry, with tears in his eyes, and in a tone of supplication, "do not look to the left as we leave the hall."

"And why, Parry?"

"Do not look, I implore you, my king."

"But what is the matter? speak," said Charles, attempting to look across the hedge of guards which surrounded him.

"It is—but you will not look, will you?—it is because they have had the axe, with which criminals are executed, brought and placed there on the table. The sight is hideous."

"Fools," said Charles, "do they take me for a coward like themselves? You have done well to warn me. Thank you, Parry."

When the moment arrived, the king followed his guards out of the hall. As he passed the table on which the axe was hid, he stopped, and turning with a smile, said:

"Aha! the axe, an ingenious device, and well worthy of those who know not what a gentleman is: you frighten me not, executioners' axe," added he, touching it with the cane which he held in his hand, "and I strike you now, waiting patiently and Christianly for you to return the blow."

And shrugging his shoulders with real contempt, he passed on. When he reached the door, a long stream of people, who had been disappointed in not being able to get into the house, and to make amends had collected to see him come out, stood on each side, as he passed, many among them glaring on him with threatening looks.

"How many people," thought he, "and not one true friend."

And as he uttered these words of doubt and depression within his mind, a voice near him said:

"Respect to fallen majesty."

The king turned quickly round, with tears in his eyes and heart. It was an old soldier of the guards, who could not see his king pass, captive before him, without rending him his last homage. But the next moment, the unfortunate man was nearly stunned with blows from the hilts of swords; and among those who set upon him the king recognized Captain Grosew.

"At last!" said Charles, "that is a severe chastisement for a very slight fault."

He continued his walk; but he had scarcely gone a hundred paces, when a furious fellow, leaning between two soldiers, spit in the king's face. Loud roars of laughter and tumultuous noise together. The crown opened and closed again, undulating like a stormy sea; and the king imagined that he saw shining in the midst of this living wave the bright eyes of Athos.

Charles wiped his face, and said with a sad smile, "Poor wretch, for half a crown he would do as much to his own father."

The king was not wrong. Athos, and his friends, again mingling with the throng, were taking a last look at the martyr king.

When the cowardly insulter had spit in the face of the captive
monarch, Athos had grasped his dagger. But D'Artagnan stopped his hand, and in a low voice cried, "Wait!"

Athos stopped. D'Artagnan leaning on Athos, made a sign to Porthos and Aramis to keep near them, and then placed himself behind the man with the bare arms, who was still laughing at his own vile pleasantry and receiving the congratulations of several others.

The man took his way toward the city. The four friends followed him. The men who had the appearance of being a butcher, descended a little steep and isolated street, looking on to the river, with two of his friends. Arrived at the bank of the river, the three men perceived that they were followed, turned round, and looked insolently at the Frenchmen.

"Athos," said D'Artagnan, "will you interpret for me?"

At this D'Artagnan walked straight up to the butcher, and touching him on the chest with the tip of his finger, said to Athos:

"Say this to him in English—You are a coward. You have insulted a defenceless man. You have besmirched the face of your king. You must die..."

Athos, pale as a ghost, repeated these words to the man, who, seeing the unpleasant preparations that were making, put himself in an attitude of defense. Aramis, at this movement, drew his sword.

"No, cried D'Artagnan, "no steel. Steel is for gentlemen."

And seizing the butcher by the throat, D'Artagnan said, "Knock the fellow down for me with a single blow."

Porthos raised his terrible arm, which whistled through the air like a sling, and the heavy mass fell with a dull noise on the skull of the coward, and broke it. The man fell like an ox under the yoke. His companions, horror-struck, could neither move nor cry out.

"Tell them this, Athos," resumed D'Artagnan; "thus shall all die who forget that a fettered man wears a sacred heart."

The two men looked at the body of their companion, swimming in black blood; and then recovering voice and legs together, ran shouting away.

"Justice is done," said Porthos, wiping his forehead. "And now," said D'Artagnan to Athos, "do not have any doubts about me; I undertake everything that concerns the king."

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CHAPTER LXII.

WHITSTABLE

It was easy to foresee that the Parliament would condemn Charles to death. Political judgments are generally merely vain formalities, for the same passions which give rise to the accusation give rise also to the condemnation. Such is the terrible logic of revolutions.

Meanwhile, before our four friends could mature their plans, they determined to put every possible obstacle in the way of the execution of the sentence. To this end they resolved to get rid of the London executioner; for though, of course, another could be sent for from the nearest town, there would be still a delay of a day or